

ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS

LETTERS  
TO  
MOTHER MARY CRUCIFIED

Translated and Annotated by  
reverend SILVAN ROUSE C.P.

Rome 1983  
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## Introduction

*Mother Mary Crucified of Jesus (Faustina Gertrude Costantini) was born in Corneto (now known as Tarquinia) on August 18, 1713. She was educated in the schools of the "Maestre Pie" and that of the Benedictine nuns. In 1730, after her mother had died, the duty of educating the younger children at home became her responsibility, for her older sister had become a Benedictine nun in 1727. In 1733 she, too, joined the same Benedictine community, even though it had long been her intense desire to enter a convent whose life-style was more austere.*

*She became acquainted with St. Paul of the Cross (1694-1775) during a retreat he preached to the Benedictine nuns in 1737 or 1738. From that time on, he became her spiritual director. He would give her conferences whenever he passed through Corneto but, more often, his direction took the form of letter-writing. Paul assured Mary Crucified that God willed her to become a Passionist nun in the new convent being built by the Costantini family at Corneto. He frequently writes of this in the letters here published.*

*Joining ten other postulants who would become the first community of Passionist nuns, Mary Crucified entered the new convent on May 3, 1771. She became its first superior. She died on November 16, 1787, renowned for her sanctity both within and without her convent. The Church, too, has recognized her life as one lived in heroic virtue.*

*Of the many letters written to her by Paul of the Cross, we only have those here published. Mary Crucified had burned much of this correspondence during one of her illnesses. Her letters to Paul of the Cross were destroyed by him, as was his practice with all the correspondence of those for whom he was spiritual director.*

*The notes and the brief analytical index will help the reader to better understand the content of these documents and the mystical experience of this, the first Passionist nun. Those who wish further*

knowledge of Mother Mary Crucified, the Passionist Nuns and St. Paul of the Cross, may read.

Jude Mead, *Dove in the cleft. The Life of Mother Mary Crucified of Jesus, C.P. The first Passionist Nun: 1713-1787*. New York 1971.

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1

Long Live the Holy Cross!

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I did not answer your letter until now, due to pressure of work and crosses, which I always want to kiss as precious pearls <sup>(1)</sup>. The news you gave me about your spirit was consoling and I see that the Divine and Sovereign Majesty is doing His merciful work in your soul <sup>(2)</sup>. You must correspond faithfully to His merciful action by humbling yourself ever more in your nothingness before His Sovereign Majesty, renouncing all these gifts and remaining in utter nakedness and nothingness. At the same time offer a holocaustal sacrifice of all these gifts and put them in the thurible of your heart so that, enkindled by God's charity, they may ascend as a fragrant incense before the Most High Majesty of the Supreme Good <sup>(3)</sup>. By renouncing herself in this way, the soul remains in her true nothingness and does not look at the gifts with attachment, but rather at the Supreme Giver <sup>(4)</sup>, so as to become more and more enamored with Him <sup>(5)</sup>. In this way she disposes herself for even greater graces. Read this point carefully, because it will help you very much <sup>(6)</sup>.

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(1) Paul's attitude toward work pressures and crosses is always a positive one.

(2) For Paul, the graces of the spiritual life are dynamically expressed as « God's merciful work » in the soul. In Paul's doctrine the primacy of action in the life of the spirit is always attributed to God.

(3) The Passion becomes the very life of Mother Crucified.

(4) Paul emphasizes the need to look beyond the gift to the Divine Giver.

(5) Note Paul's expression for advancement in union with God - "to become more and more enamored with Him".

(6) Paul singles out the practical helpful point of fixing one's gaze on God.

Above all, let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit (7). Remain in your nothingness and when you feel the divine attractions and impressions, obey the invitation God offers you, now totally immersed in God in holy silence, now remaining totally absorbed in that deep, loving wonder, contemplating the Divine perfections, at another time rejoicing in the Divine praises (8), at another time penetrated by love and sorrow for the sufferings of Jesus etc (9). But try to divest yourself of a too lively imagination, remaining in pure faith without images, because you will be able to walk with greater security:

Dark faith is the sure guide of holy love!

Oh, what delight its certainty brings to my heart (10)!

Now I shall tell you something about my own extreme needs (11). Know, my daughter in Jesus Christ, that my afflictions increase, both from the fury of the devil and from well-intentioned men (12). And if God does not give me great strength, I am afraid to remain under its weight; I mean that even my weak body will yield, and death will end everything. Therefore I hope that His Divine Majesty will welcome me in the bosom of His Divine mercies. I say all this to you confidentially.

I see the work (13) that has been born, but I also see that there is much evidence that it can die in its birth, because I do not see an opening so that servants of God may come to be foundation stones

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(7) Emphasis on guidance by the Holy Spirit.

(8) Note Paul's encouragement to follow the lead of the Spirit and the freedom it brings.

(9) In this "love and sorrow" experience of the sufferings of Christ, compare the doctrine of St. Francis de Sales and Paul's Spiritual Diary. Divine rebirth should be celebrated in the Crucified Word whose wounds are the most secure way of access to the Father.

(10) Note the certainty begotten of dark faith and holy love - two constants in Paul's spiritual doctrine. Cfr. Poem of Spiritual Direction to Agnes Grazi: *Letters II*, 260-261.

(11) Paul shares his own needs with Mother Mary Crucified.

(12) Charity in Paul is always delicate and strong; those who afflict him are called "well-intentioned".

(13) The "work" Paul refers to is his own Congregation. At this time, his trials were caused by some diffident bishops and clergy in regard to his work and by some religious who abandoned the Congregation. Paul feared that the Congregation might die in its birth.

to raise this spiritual edifice. However, it may be that when I, who am an obstacle, have been removed, His Divine Majesty will provide a way.

I am preparing myself for anything and I simply resign and abandon myself to God's Good Pleasure, ready to see this work done and undone, if God so wills it <sup>(14)</sup>. My heart is in such distress, that it seems that I have never been this way before, and it even weakens my body very much. I say all of this confidentially to my daughter in Jesus Christ; it is very fitting for the poor father to inform his own children of his needs <sup>(15)</sup>.

Therefore pray very, very much for me, because my needs are great. Offer the Most Precious Blood of Jesus and the Sorrows of Holy Mary <sup>(16)</sup> to the Eternal Father, and ask for assistance, help and mercy for this poor sinner who has so many troubles, which I gladly embrace for the love of Jesus Christ <sup>(17)</sup>.

I shall await your letter to see how things are going in your interior life etc. Cry out to God, my daughter, and tell Him to have pity on me and to strengthen all those in the Congregation who are so firmly determined to serve God. Ask Him to send us others according to His Divine Heart <sup>(18)</sup>. May Jesus fill you with His holy love and bless you. Amen.

Your most unworthy servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS  
Least of the Discalced Clerics Regular

(14) Note Paul's resignation and abandonment with regard to the great love of his life-his Congregation.

(15) Note tender father-child relationship between Paul and Mother Mary Crucified.

(16) Reference to Mother of Sorrows.

(17) Paul sees his sufferings always in terms of love of Christ.

(18) Note Paul's request for prayers for vocations.

*St. Angelo*  
*September 3*  
*Departure, September 14, 1754*

2

The Passion of Jesus Christ <sup>(1)</sup>  
May Jesus always be your Way,  
your Truth and your Life. Amen <sup>(2)</sup>.

I am replying to your letter which I received yesterday evening <sup>(3)</sup>, and I am sorry that the betony <sup>(4)</sup> did not reach you. I sent it to Mr. Carboni of Vetralla, who promised me that he would send it at the first opportunity to Dominic with the envelope to your Reverence, since he corresponds with Dominic <sup>(5)</sup> to whom I have recommended it.

I thank the great Father of mercies <sup>(6)</sup> for your improved health, and you express it well when you say that the Lord is playing games with you. In fact, Sacred Scripture says the same: "Playing on the surface of his earth", and immediately it adds: "and I found delight in the sons of men" <sup>(7)</sup>. Oh, fortunate is that soul who allows the Supreme Good to play his games of love in the silence of faith and love, abandoned to His Divine Good Pleasure, in health as well as in sickness, in life and in death! Oh, a thousand times fortunate is the soul, if, espoused to God's Will, she cherishes this Sovereign Spouse in naked suffering within and without, resting in the bosom of the heavenly Father and feeding on this divine Manna of God's Will in

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(1) In 26 of the 32 letters, Paul begins with the phrase: "The Passion of Jesus Christ" He abbreviates the phrase with the initials "I.C.P." Thirteen years have passed since the preceding letter, but the directives of Paul show that Mother Crucified continues on her spiritual journey to the Father.

(2) Cfr. John 14: 6.

(3) Note the punctuality of Paul in answering the letters of Mother Crucified. He answers sixteen of the thirty-two letters on the day after he receives them. One letter is answered the day he receives it (Letter 24). At other times he apologizes for his delay because of his illness or pressure of work.

(4) A plant of the mint family, with spikes of white, yellow or lavender flowers, formerly used in medicine.

(5) Dominic Costantini, the brother of Mother Mary Crucified.

(6) Note the evangelical language.

(7) Proverbs 8:31.

spirit and truth, tasting and delighting that it is fulfilled in every event, bitter though it be<sup>(8)</sup>. For by contemplating the greatest bitterness, tempests, afflictions of spirit and of body with the eye of faith, contemplating them, I say, with the eye of faith, they are no longer bitter, but very sweet and delightful, like joys springing from the bosom of holy love.

Ponder these truths with mature reflection<sup>(9)</sup> and set aside every fear. You have signs clearer than the day that God loves you and that the work is all His. Humble yourself, remain in your dreadful nothingness, but let your nothingness disappear immediately in the Infinite All which is God; immerse yourself there and remain there — always a true adorer of the Most High in spirit and in truth<sup>(10)</sup>.

Your Reverence asks me to give you proofs that you are serving His Divine Majesty well. You know how many proofs I have given during the many, many years I have been directing you<sup>(11)</sup>, but since I am leaving for the missions, I also want to add these which will be a summary etc.

Mary Crucified should always be clothed for a feast; and how? This is how. You should always be clothed in your interior with the most holy sufferings of Jesus, crucified and dead to every created thing and living only in God<sup>(12)</sup>. You should set aside every earthly thought, even the trials of your relatives as you point out in your letter, but you should recommend these matters to the Good God and then set them aside and continue on in your mystical death to everything which is not God. Prayer then should be continual, day and night, walking and standing, working and resting, etc. Such prayer is made in the deepest part of the sacred interior desert, in

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(8) The strong Paulacrucian doctrine of abandonment, even to naked suffering; the highest degree of union with God's Will takes place when it becomes one's very food. Christ Himself affirmed that His food was to do the Father's Will.

(9) Paul counsels Mother Crucified to use her mind - to "ponder these truths with mature reflection".

(10) Note the positive doctrine regarding "nothingness"; she is to allow it to disappear in the Infinite All...

(11) At this time, Paul has been directing Mother Crucified for 17 years.

(12) Note the festal, paschal character of reference to sharing in the sufferings of Christ. "clothed for a feast" suggests the Pauline theme of putting on Christ (cf. Romans 13:14). For Paul of the Cross, to be "clothed for a feast" means the habitual remembrance of the Passion which serves as fuel for enkindling the fire of love in every circumstance. Being clothed with the sufferings of Jesus and the habitual remembrance of the Passion are intimately linked with the spirituality of Baptism.

deepest solitude, in loving interior repose in God, totally absorbed and lost in that sea of Infinite Charity. You should never abandon the holocaustal sacrifice of your whole being to the Supreme and Infinite Good <sup>(13)</sup>. Such a sacrifice is to be made in the fire of Divine charity, enkindled in that sacred bundle of myrrh, that is, the most holy sufferings of Jesus Christ. All this should be done with the doors closed <sup>(14)</sup>, that is, far from every sensible thing, in pure and naked faith.

In this sacred fire Mary Crucified should allow all her fears, either of losing herself or any other thing, to be consumed. The sole exception is that peaceful fear which keeps her on guard so as not to displease her Beloved God and which makes her avoid every occasion of offending Him, etc <sup>(15)</sup>.

All other fears, however, should be put to death and consumed in the fire of love, as a sign that He who put Mary Crucified under a press, would allow only peace and love to result as from the marrow of the bones <sup>(16)</sup>.

Therefore may you live in love and may you live on holy love, and remain in your nothingness. May you rob nothing from God; all that belongs to you is your nothingness etc. Pray for me and for the Congregation, but do it from the heart, because the needs are great <sup>(17)</sup> Pray that the missions will be fruitful, so that all will be converted, abandon sin and contention, and that there will be true peace in all <sup>(18)</sup>.

I am leaving on Saturday, the fourteenth of the present month and I am going to Sabina <sup>(19)</sup>, which has no postal service. There is no need for you to write to me; I have even told the Retreats that they are not to write. If the road went by there, I would gladly stop,

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(13) Note continual, dynamic character of total-self-offering.

(14) "with the doors closed" - Would this not be an indication of Paul's theology of cloister? Paul's emphasis is not so much a canonical rule as the consequence of baptismal life pressed to its ultimate limits. It is the "mystery hidden with Christ in God".

(15) The Spirit's donal action of Fear.

(16) Paul continually puts the emphasis on love.

(17) Significantly Paul asks for prayers for himself and the Congregation "from the heart", the deepest part of the person.

(18) Paul's understanding of a fruitful mission: conversion, abandonment of sin and contention and true peace. In other words, turning toward God, away from sin, and this begets peace, which is experienced only through the blood of the cross.

(19) Sabina: part of the region of Lazio

but I am going east and your place there is west; so now you can see why I can't come. Later on I shall make another trip, but who knows whether I can take the road to Corneto <sup>(20)</sup>, which is so bad, and I am old <sup>(21)</sup>, infirm and weak? I shall recommend these matters to the Lord; however, I would not know what to do. May Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen.

Faithfully yours,  
Your most unworthy and indebted <sup>(22)</sup> Servant  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*St. Angelo*  
*September 7, 1762*

3

The Passion of Jesus Christ

Very Reverend Mother,

I received your letter last evening and I appreciate it very much in the Lord. I have examined the condition of your soul as you indicate it in the your letter. I think that I can say candidly and unhesitatingly that your present state is the best you have ever been in throughout your whole spiritual life. And believe me, things have never gone so well for you before God, as they are going now. Therefore I beg you to be ever more faithful to God and to continue your practices in a prudent way. Above all I recommend to you a deep resignation to God's Holy Will; live in abandonment to His divine good Pleasure in that naked desolate suffering which you are experiencing, without complaining within or without, either to God or to creatures, resting like an infant on the bosom of the Heavenly

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(20) Corneto (now Tarquinia): an ancient, Etruscan city in the Province of Viterbo.

(21) Paul is 60 years old at this time.

(22) Note that Paul adds "indebted" to "unworthy" in this conclusion.

Father. Leave the care of all events to Him, without thinking of what will be yours, either in time or in eternity, but suffer in the sacred silence of faith, naked, poor and humble in your nothingness on the Cross of the Gentle Jesus <sup>(1)</sup>.

I assure you then, in the Lord, that this very precious state will bring inestimable blessings and treasures to your soul <sup>(2)</sup>. Above all, keep the balsam jar of your sufferings tightly closed by silence and resignation, so that it does not evaporate outside by seeking creature comforts, which would be harmful. The more resigned, the more abandoned to God by silent suffering you are, the sooner the trial now sent by God to test you will end etc <sup>(3)</sup>.

I received the basket of pastry the day before yesterday and I ask the Lord to reward you for your charity. But don't put yourself to that trouble any more since I am better now <sup>(4)</sup> and next Sunday I hope to begin a mission without delay in a small town near here <sup>(5)</sup>. Pray for us to the Lord, that we may also remain healthy etc.

Neither have we gotten news about Dominic <sup>(6)</sup>; however, I think that by this time they should be returning and we are waiting for them to pass by. Greet your kind sisters for me in the Lord <sup>(7)</sup>. Leaving you in the Holy Side of Jesus, and assuring you of my best wishes, I remain faithfully yours.

I am leaving for the Mission soon.

Your most unworthy and indebted servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

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(1) Paul counsels Mother Crucified in a period of particular suffering and assures her that all is going very well. Note the strong spirituality which Paul recommends to his directee: fidelity to God, deep resignation, total abandonment to Divine Good Pleasure in naked, desolate suffering. Paul's teaching on abandonment always remained orthodox because he was always so careful to base it on the example of Christ and His Cross.

(2) Note clarity and sureness of Paul's judgment.

(3) True to the Gospel narrative of the Passion, Paul puts value on silent suffering.

(4) Example of the delicate thoughtfulness of Mother Crucified and Paul's grateful response.

(5) The small town is Capranica, in the diocese of Sutri and Nepi, where Paul began a mission on September 12th.

(6) Dominic: the brother of Mother Mary Crucified.

(7) Paul refers to the two blood sisters of Mother Crucified who were also Benedictines. They were Mother Mary Teresa and Sister Mary Antonina and they transferred to the Passionist Nuns on April 4, 1772.

*Toscanella, in the Retreat of  
St. Maria del Cerro,  
December 11, 1762*

4

Very Reverend and Faithful Mother in Christ,

I received your letter in yesterday evening's mail. In reply I say that you should make no account of what happened concerning that extraordinary confessor which you mentioned <sup>(1)</sup>. What does it matter to you what people say and that they disapprove what you are doing? Seek to please God alone, and let them say what they want. Above all, show all charity and meekness toward your accuser, and think that she has done it for your good and with a right intention <sup>(2)</sup>. Don't let one word of complaint escape your lips about anyone; otherwise unruly passion would take over. Act as you were before and let each one say what she pleases.

Be faithful to God, accepting every trial from His loving hand in silence, and with great meekness. Everything will disappear like the mist before the warm sun. Be strong and constant by persevering in your way of life <sup>(3)</sup>. Remain recollected always in God, in interior solitude, and seek no other consolation than to please Him and do His Holy Will. This Will is fulfilled better in aridities, desolations, abandonment and other trials than in consolations, in which even a little child is brave. But in great afflictions we find proof of virile souls, not cowardly ones. Be happy, Mother Mary Crucified, and be patient in bearing the Cross where you are <sup>(4)</sup>, because your time will come to bear it elsewhere <sup>(5)</sup>. Now is the time to suffer and to be

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(1) Some of the sisters considered the penances of Mother Crucified exaggerated and complained to the confessor and then to the Bishop. The Bishop at the time was Bishop Giustiniani. Believing the denunciation, the Bishop commissioned the confessor of the monastery to give her a public penance. Mother Crucified obeyed and did the penance imposed.

(2) Note Paul's immediate intuition of the primacy of charity in this situation.

(3) Mother Crucified's "way of life" is described in terms of being "always recollected in God, in interior solitude, seeking no other consolation than to please Him and do His holy Will".

(4) For Paul, happiness and suffering are compatible.

(5) Paul is a realist; bearing the cross has no respect for geography: it is a universal experience. Not only at St. Lucy's but also elsewhere.

silent. Greet your good sisters for me (6). I wish all of you a Happy Feast from the holy altar. Pray much for me because my needs are very great. Leaving you in the Holy Side of Jesus, I remain faithfully yours in Jesus Christ,

Your most unworthy and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*Retreat of St. Maria del Cerro*  
*December 22, 1762*

5

The Passion of Jesus Christ

I received your letter and I would have been more pleased had you said something like this: Oh, what a grace! Oh, what joy! Oh, what a gift God gives me in having the opportunity to serve my good and blessed accusers, and that Holy Communion would be given to them every morning as a reward (1)! But to hear what you exclaim! Oh, what suffering! Oh, what a torment! etc., for having to serve my accusers! This reveals that there is little, very little virtue in you, because one of the greatest graces which the Lord has given to you is the present opportunity of practising true humility of heart, true patience and meekness, and above all, great charity toward the same, looking upon them as most noble instruments which God uses to enrich your soul with virtues like the above etc (2).

Now seek every opportunity to serve the above-mentioned ones

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(6) Reference to her blood-sisters, Mother Maria Teresa and Sister Mary Antonina.

(1) Paul wants Mother Crucified to envision her suffering as a grace, a gift, a joy rather than a torment. Paul the Apostle called suffering a charism. Note that in this letter Paul speaks of accusers, while in Letter 4 he refers to only one accuser.

(2) Paul sees secondary afflictive causes as noble instruments used by God for His purifying purposes.

etc., to do every good for them which you can, to show them all charity, meekness etc., to look upon them with great reverence and respect as instruments used by the Blessed God to accomplish in you those holy virtues which you lack <sup>(3)</sup>. Go in search of such opportunities more eagerly than do those who seek pearls and diamonds. I am grateful in Jesus Christ for your charity in sending the basket to this Retreat. May His Divine Majesty reward you for the charity shown to these Religious. Remain deeply hidden in your interior, by very deep knowledge of your dreadful nothingness, so that the Divine Nativity of the Divine Humanized Word will thus be celebrated in your spirit, in the silence of the night of holy faith and holy love <sup>(4)</sup>.

Greet your good sisters for me in the Lord <sup>(5)</sup>, and assure them that in the solemn Mass of the coming holy night <sup>(6)</sup>, I shall put the hearts of all three of them <sup>(7)</sup> within the swaddling bands of the gentle Infant, so that He might warm them with the fire of His divine charity. May Mary give them her holy milk and those sweet tears of love which flow from the holy eyes of the Divine Mother, as she sees the King of Kings in her arms, wrapped and bound in the poorest bits of cloth and as she bathes him with her tears, etc., hiding herself completely in the Divine Humanized Word, reborn every moment in him to a more God-like life etc. <sup>(8)</sup>, I am in a hurry; asking every blessing for you, I remain sincerely yours,

Your most unworthy and indebted servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

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(3) Paul counsels positive, kind action toward the accusers. For him charity is always the primal virtue.

(4) Paul's Christmas wish to Mother Crucified is for the birth of the Divine Humanized Word in her.

(5) The reference is to her two blood sisters who are also Benedictines.

(6) i.e., the Feast of Christmas.

(7) The three refer to the three sisters, Mother Crucified, Mother Mary Teresa and Sister Mary Antonina.

(8) Mary is mystically present in the spiritual rebirth of souls in the Word. Cfr. *Letters* III, 604.

Cerro  
January 11, 1763

6

### The Passion of Jesus Christ

Very Reverend Mother,

I received your letter yesterday evening. I thank the Lord of mercies that He continues to grant you His mercy and especially the consolation you had on the holy feast of Christmas, for which you should be very grateful to our Good God. Don't be surprised that aridities and desolations follow <sup>(1)</sup>, because they are necessary for you so that, with God's grace, you may attain that perfect experiential knowledge of your real nothingness which you have of yourself and that you may also continually practice resignation to God's Will. Therefore continue to be faithful to your customary practices, both of the virtues and especially of prayer, and keep yourself in continual recollection, paying no attention to objects of the senses. Remain within yourself in the interior temple of your spirit, that is, the highest part of your soul, attentive to God. Rest there in that Divine Bosom, in suffering and silence <sup>(2)</sup>. Be attentive now to this maxim which I am writing to you: Fish are mute, although the other animals, four-legged as well as flying ones, form their voice according to their nature. But the fish has been created mute by God, in order to let us know that one who is in the storms of affliction, should be mute and never open her mouth to complain etc. Remember this maxim well.

I should not write to your brothers <sup>(4)</sup>, urging them to hasten the work on the convent, because I know that they have it at heart, and Dominic is doing as much as he can. Think of last year's meager harvest and you will see that it is a great favour that he can even do what he is doing <sup>(5)</sup>. Let us abandon ourselves to God's Will and leave the weaving of the cloth to Him who knows how to weave it.

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(1) Note the alternating communication of God; first consolation, then aridities.

(2) The great action of the interior souls is faith and love.

(3) Cfr. *Dark Night*, Book I, chapters XI-XII.

(4) Canon Nicholas Costantini and Dominic Costantini.

(5) Cfr. *Letters* III, 383 (April 28, 1763).

Greetings to your sisters and I ask all three of you pray for us.  
May Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your most unworthy and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*Retreat of Cerro,  
Vigil of Christmas 1764*

7

The Passion of Jesus Christ

May the Infant Jesus be and be born in our hearts

I recall that St. Jerome on a certain occasion when his own saintly spiritual daughters, St. Paula, St. Marcella and other holy Roman matrons were estranged from him because of some sharp tongues, wrote a letter for his defense to one of his friends <sup>(1)</sup>. He told him to greet the afore-named holy women in the Lord, adding that, whether they willed it or not, they were his daughters in Christ: *Velint, nolint, filiae meae sunt* etc.

So I dare to say the same to Mary Crucified: whether you will it or not, you are my ever blessed daughter in Jesus Christ, because I hope to see you clothed in the same habit of the Most Holy Passion of Jesus Christ which I wear. God entrusted your soul to me many years ago <sup>(2)</sup>, and if you are silent now, I don't want you to keep quiet because this is not the time to remain silent. Therefore I announce to you great joy, joy in the Holy Spirit in the present holy Solemnity of Christmas <sup>(3)</sup>. For if you open the door of your heart,

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(1) Cfr. St. Jerome *Epist.* XLV, PL. 22, 483ff. See P. E. Zoffoli, C.P., *Le Monache Passioniste*, 1970, p. 244, note 26.

(2) 27 years ago.

(3) Note Paul's uniting joy in the Holy Spirit with the Mystery of the Incarnation.

the gentle Jesus will be born in you, and the Divine Nativity will take place in your spirit <sup>(4)</sup>. Have courage, the birth of the true Sun of justice is already near; therefore abide in deep solitude in the most intimate part of your spirit, and remain in the sacred silence of faith and holy love in the bosom of the Father, so that you will be reborn in Christ Jesus His Son to a new life of holy love <sup>(5)</sup>.

I would like to tell you some other good things but I am not inclined to do so now. God knows how I am and besides the man of the house wants to leave and I have no time. I will say what I can to your spirit from the holy altar this holy night, and I will pray that the Supreme Good will grant you abundant treasures of grace and perfect holiness of life. Pray to the Divine Majesty for these two poor old men <sup>(6)</sup> and for the Congregation. Cry out much to the Lord so that he may provide it with holy workmen <sup>(7)</sup>. Greet your good sisters for me. I also wish them a Happy Feast from the holy altar. I am in a hurry, the man of the house is leaving.

Sincerely yours,  
Your most unworthy servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

(4) Paul here describes the most perfect mystical death. The soul, long-accustomed to resting with Jesus in the paternal Good Pleasure, experiences itself as clothed with all the love which flows from the Father to the Incarnate Word, impelling Him toward the Cross. The soul then opens the door of the heart wide so that the gentle Jesus may enter in and be mystically born in the soul. In utter self-emptiness the soul understands that God wants to be glorified by it just as He is glorified by Christ in the experience of the Cross. In this way the soul enters into the very Heart of Jesus and experiences that secret holiness of the cross from which all life takes its meaning.

(5) Note the dispositions for Divine Nativity according to Paul: solitude, sacred silence of faith and holy love in the bosom of the Father.

(6) Paul of the Cross and his brother John Baptist. Paul was 70 and John Baptist was 69.

(7) Vocations are very much on Paul's mind; note the evangelical phrase: "holy workmen".

The Passion of Jesus Christ

May the sweet and most holy Name of Jesus be in our hearts

I received your letter last evening, and I can now tell you the good things which I wanted to tell you in my other letter. First: according to my poor opinion, you have never been in a better state than at present, and for many reasons. The principal reason is that your suffering is more naked and divested of consolation, and this is a grace and a great gift of the Lord which He usually grants only to His most beloved souls <sup>(1)</sup>.

The point is to know how to profit from this by a silent patience. I have already written to you once, although I do not recall when <sup>(2)</sup>, that the fish have no tongue and this helps us to understand that one who is in the stormy sea of affliction should not have a tongue to complain with, neither to her neighbor nor to herself nor even to God. Oh, what an important point this is! Practice it faithfully because after the storm, great tranquillity and serenity will come etc. But you are not yet dead; and the Good God, by the suffering He permits you to endure, wants you to die a mystical death <sup>(3)</sup> to everything which is not God. Behave like a dead person, without tongue, without ears, without eyes etc.; as a dead body when it is buried is trampled upon by all, so you, who are like one dead and buried, let yourself be trampled on by all, becoming the opprobrium and reproach of the people. I rejoice to hear that this new confessor is treating you harshly and is hard and severe; oh, what a good friend he is!

Now God wants to put the finishing touch to the statue and to

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(1) Suffering is a gift and a grace. Recall that the Apostle Paul refers to suffering as a charism.

(2) The occasion was in Letter 6, written two years previously.

(3) Recall that sometime between 1760-1762, Paul wrote his treatise on *Mystical Death*.

embellish it for the gallery of heaven. Therefore He permits the one who should be giving you some spiritual consolation to use the finest and sharpest chisel, to perfect the statue. Oh, what a noble work this is! Profit by this precious opportunity; allow yourself to be mortified, reprove and treated with all severity and harshness. But always act as a true servant of the Lord, ever silent, ever meek, ever peaceful. Ask His Divine Majesty not to deprive you of such an instrument as long as the work God wants to do in you is unfinished (4).

Continue the interior recollection since aridity cannot impede it (5) because it doesn't matter whether one feels the taste of the divine presence or not (6). Rather it is very important to remain in pure faith divested of every joy, for the love of God Who is the joy of our joys. Therefore rest on the bosom of God like an infant, in the silence of faith and holy love, with the superior part of your spirit, paying no attention to the noises which the enemies make around the spirit. These are outside and you are within, in the most intimate cell of the spirit alone with the Divine Bridegroom. I wish you a Happy New Year and the same to your good sisters (7). May you have many more happy ones, fruitful in heroic virtues and great perfection so that you may do what St. John Chrysostom said: show your Creator the same silence which the clay offers the potter. Oh, what a great maxim! And it means this: that that silence which the mud and clay shows and keeps for the potter, you should exhibit the same to your Creator. The mud is always silent, whether the potter makes a vessel for a lofty purpose or for a humble one, it is silent; whether he breaks it or throws it in pieces into the sewer, it is silent and contented as if you were putting it in a royal gallery. Keep this great doctrine in mind and practice it in the circumstance in which you find yourself, with the confessor as well as with the others etc (8). I

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(4) Note Paul's positive attitude toward God's permissive Will in allowing others to inflict suffering on us.

(5) Interior recollection and aridity are totally compatible.

(6) The Divine Presence is not bound to feelings but to faith.

(7) Reference to her two blood-sisters in religion.

(8) In St. John Chrysostom cfr. *De incomprehensibili Dei natura*, Hom. 2, 5: PG. 48, 715. Here Paul is talking about mystical silence - a clear sign of mystical death in which the soul devotes herself to naked suffering solely for the glory of the Crucified Christ. This is a holy and mystical silence because of its relationship to the silence of Jesus in His Passion, a silence full of mystery. Even Pontius Pilate was filled with wonderment in its presence (Matt. 26: 63 and 27: 13ff). Note that in Paul, this mystical silence operates in the midst of daily contingencies.

am in a hurry and I ask the Lord to grant you abundant blessings.  
Pray much for me and for the Congregation. I am cordially yours,

Your most unworthy and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*Retreat of Cerro*  
*February 5, 1765*

9

The Passion of Jesus Christ  
May Jesus be always in your heart

In reply to your letter which I received last evening, I rejoice to hear that your health is better and that you are regaining your strength to serve the Lord with greater fervor <sup>(1)</sup>. I do not cease, nor shall I cease to pray to His Divine Majesty for your good intentions. But I would not want you give much importance to your little pains, darknesses and aridities. True and pure love of God always makes the suffering endured for the Divine Lover seem small and little <sup>(2)</sup>. When it shall please the Lord that you resume your former penitential life <sup>(3)</sup>, He will give you the strength, health, impulse and light so that you can do it. For the present, continue to regain your health, and above all, unite yourself ever more to God's Will, by a silent and peaceful patience, charity and meekness. Continue to remain alone in the interior temple of your spirit, resting in the bosom of the heavenly Father and adoring Him in spirit and in truth <sup>(4)</sup>.

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(1) Note how Paul sees the purpose of good health in terms of serving the Lord with more fervor.

(2) Paul de-emphasizes the sufferings of Mother Crucified and puts the accent on love of God.

(3) In January of this year of 1765, some sickness compelled Mother Crucified to suspend her usual penances temporarily.

(4) cfr. John 4:23.

I have already written to our Dominic<sup>(5)</sup> that I would help Mother Abbess by sending one of our Religious, who will be here on Quinquagesima Sunday to give the spiritual exercises at this monastery of Toscanella<sup>(6)</sup>. I hope that he will be there to serve them without delay around the second of March. This Religious is Father John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer<sup>(7)</sup>, a learned and very holy man, who recently gave the retreat at that holy monastery of Vetralla<sup>(8)</sup>, to the great satisfaction and benefit of those very dedicated religious women. I hope that it will be the same there.

Please extend my greetings to Mother Abbess and ask her to obtain faculties from the Most Reverend Bishop, since that is necessary. I am in a hurry and remain cordially yours.

I add that I have a certain light that your brother Dominic wants one or two conditions for the new convent, which are totally opposed and most contrary to our holy Rules, to which I will never, never consent. I know that he made it understood that if it is not done as he says, according, to the afore-mentioned conditions, he will put other Nuns there from another Institute. Let him put there whom he wills, because I have no other desire than to do the Holy Will of God, but I will always be very firm in maintaining our observance.

Your most unworthy servant,  
PAUL OF THE †<sup>(9)</sup>

(5) The brother of Mother Crucified and the man who built the first Convent for the Nuns.

(6) Toscanella: is now called Tuscania. The Poor Clares lived in that Monastery.

(7) Father John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer (Gorresio) was born December 14, 1734 at Bagnasco, Alba in the Province of Cuneo (today the diocese of Mondovì). Entered the Congregation in 1755 and was ordained in 1760, he was a very successful missionary and superior. He was the man who succeeded Paul as General (in 1778) and was again elected General in 1790. He died January 9, 1801 at the Retreat of Sts. John and Paul in Rome.

(8) Reference to the Carmelite Nuns of Vetralla.

(9) Note how Paul signs this letter, using the symbol + for Cross.

*Toscanella,  
Retreat of Cerro  
February 16, 1765*

### The Passion of Jesus Christ

In haste I say to Mother Mary Crucified that I received your letter yesterday evening. It pleased me because I see that you are very resigned and united to the Holy Will of God; and if that continues, you will become a great saint <sup>(1)</sup>.

Now I want to tell you briefly about that certain light I had on the thoughts of your brother Dominic about the new convent. First: he says that he wants the first chapter to state that the Nuns may eat meat and secondly, that there be a parlor etc.

Let him write the Rule and Constitutions; let him get the approval of the Pope and then let him put the Nuns there as he deems fitting, because I will never consent to such a thing, which will be destructive of our Institute of the Most Holy Passion.

I know that parlors are the ruin of monasteries, and I have experience of it <sup>(2)</sup>, since I have been ministering to them for a long time by preaching retreats etc.

The new monastery, if it is to be the Institute of the Most Holy Passion as we are, must, like us, observe the Holy Rules, approved by

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(1) Note intimate connection Paul sees between great holiness and union with God's Will.

(2) It is important to know the background of this remark. In eighteenth century Italy, there were about 60,000 Nuns, cloistered or semi-cloistered, since active Sisters in the modern sense of the word did not exist. (However, the Pious Teachers had an active ministry and were founded at Viterbo by Blessed Rose Venerini (+ 1728). The material upkeep of the monasteries was generally guaranteed by the dowry system of the Choir Nuns and the rather mitigated life of poverty and common life. The Nuns practically lived their own private lives, receiving gifts and bringing their own furniture to the monastery and they retained the money from work they did.

Little girls were often received into the monasteries for educational purposes and remained there even when they may not have had a vocation. Amusements and worldly entertainment infiltrated the parlors which became sources of constant dissipation. That is why Paul could write: "parlors are the ruin of monasteries, and I have experience of it, since I have been ministering to them for a long time by preaching retreats etc".

the Pope; otherwise I wash my hands of it. Never will I consent to it, because the Good Lord does not will it. We want to form a community of truly holy nuns totally detached from all created things, who will resemble the Suffering Jesus and His Sorrowing Mother Mary, who is to be the Superior of the monastery <sup>(3)</sup>, in penance, mortification and the holy virtues.

The Nuns of St. Fiora <sup>(4)</sup>, to whom I have ministered, fast every day, and in the evening they have only two apples, one cooked, the other raw, with a small piece of bread etc. They sleep on straw, rise at midnight, wear sandals on their bare feet etc., and I would like you to know that these are delicate women in that convent.

If your Reverence wants to enlighten your brother by telling him all that I am writing to you, feel free to do so. I am in a hurry; greetings to your sisters <sup>(5)</sup> and tell them all that, and let them pray for me. I am cordially yours,

Your most unworthy servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

(3) When Paul says that Mary is the Superior of the Monastery, he is not simply stating a pious thought. He is attributing to Mary the role of supreme exemplar and the defender of the original inspiration (these two functions pertain to every superior). Recall the charismatic origin of the Congregation in which Mary appears to Paul as the one who transmits and impersonates the religious and mystical ideal of the Passion. In two visions Mary herself completes the work of Paul's vocation.

The Passion of Jesus is the ineffable mystery which enveloped the whole interior life of Mary. An identical "habit" now envelops Paul completely as he begins to understand that he must become the radiating center of the mystery of salvation by his penitential and apostolic life.

(4) These were Capuchin Nuns.

(5) The blood-sisters of Mother Crucified.

*Toscanella,  
Retreat of the Cerro  
February 19, 1765*

11

The Passion of Jesus Christ  
May Jesus be with us always

Yesterday evening I received your letter and also Dominic's letter <sup>(1)</sup>, in which I see the very devoted sentiments and resolutions of his good heart which lead me to hope and believe in the happy outcome of the Monastery <sup>(2)</sup> and of everything; and I thank the Lord for this. I am very busy writing letters <sup>(3)</sup>, and other things, and I don't have time to write at length as I have just done now to Dominic. I hope to be there in the middle of next May to take care of this business at length with the Bishop <sup>(4)</sup>, and we shall discuss it together with you and Dominic, and everything will be concluded and resolved for the glory of God and the good of souls. Let us continue to pray, to cry out to God so that He might give us the lights necessary to succeed well in this matter, which is very great and important <sup>(5)</sup>. I need health and I also need to have a little more life, if I am to cooperate by the labors, travels etc. I am in a hurry and I leave you in the Side of Jesus. My greetings in the Lord to your sisters etc. I remain cordially yours,

Your most unworthy and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

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(31) We have no certain knowledge about what Mother Crucified did to persuade her brother Dominic to follow Father Paul's plan, but how can we doubt her intervention? The message of the Founder was clear; if Dominic persisted in his idea, Paul would wash his hands of the whole project. The letter of Dominic to Father Paul a few days later indicates that Mother Crucified accomplished her mission very well.

(2) The new foundation of Passionist Nuns.

(3) Another letter written by Paul on this same day was one to Thomas Fossi.

(4) Paul is referring to Bishop Saverio Giustiniani.

(5) Note Paul's evaluation of the Passionist Nuns' foundation: "very great and important".

*Retreat of St.  
Angelo  
June 15, 1765*

12

The Passion of Jesus Christ

With this note <sup>(1)</sup> I want to thank you in Jesus Christ for the good medicinal water you sent to me in your charity and I ask the kind Jesus to give you an eternal reward.

I hope that your Reverence is willingly crucified with Jesus Christ, without comfort, since you bear that name <sup>(2)</sup>.

Oh, what a great treasure naked suffering contains, a suffering without comfort either from heaven or from earth! Esteem it highly, and be grateful to God for it. Offer yourself frequently as a holocaustal victim to His Divine Majesty on the altar of the cross, and there end by dying that mystical death in Christ. This brings a new life of love with it, a God-like life, because it is united to the Supreme Good by charity <sup>(3)</sup>. Therein then we know clearly how precious naked suffering is in true meekness and silent patience.

Greet your good sisters for me in the Lord. I leave and look at all three of you in the Sacred Heart of the tender Jesus <sup>(4)</sup>. Pray much for me and for our Congregation. I remain cordially yours,

Your most unworthy and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

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(1) This is a simple thank-you note. Yet Paul takes the occasion to give a marvelous synthesis of norms which the soul is to follow if she is to experience the secret holiness of the cross.

(2) Paul's strong spirituality emerges clearly in this line.

(3) Reference again to mystical death and its correlative, God-like life.

(4) Note mention of Sacred Heart in month of June.

*St. Angelo*  
*May 13, 1766*

13

The Passion of Jesus Christ

Very Reverend Mother,

I received your Reverence's letter last evening and I appreciate it very much in the Lord. I thank you in Jesus Christ for the charity which you continually offer me by your prayers. My health is hanging on a spiderweb and I expect to die very soon, because my illness is continual <sup>(1)</sup>. God knows how gladly I would come to see you there, but I cannot run the risk anymore of making journeys, because I don't have the health. When the Good Lord wills it, He will also give me the strength <sup>(2)</sup>.

I have strong confidence in God that He will pour the gifts of the Holy Spirit into your heart with greater fulness at the coming solemnity of Pentecost. Therefore prepare yourself by deep detachment from every created thing and by total abandonment to the Divine Good Pleasure, without any attachment to sensible devotion, that is, to interior consolations. Remain in true interior solitude, adoring God in spirit and in truth. Totally hidden in His Divine Bosom, desire nothing but His most pure and purified holy love and His greater glory in all your actions. In this way, you will be disposed to receive the Holy Spirit <sup>(3)</sup>.

Your brother, Dominic, informed me through Father Candido <sup>(4)</sup> that he wants the Nuns of our Institute to eat meat three times

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(1) Paul seems to have a premonition of death: yet he lived for nine more years.

(2) Paul is not able to go to Tarquinia to have a spiritual conference with Mother Crucified because of ill health. He supplies for it by this letter and indicates the dispositions she should have to prepare herself for the graces of Pentecost. He also speaks about the painful news of probable failure in the projected foundation, since he refuses to accept the conditions put down by Dominic.

(3) Paul speaks about the dispositive preparation for the donal action of the Spirit.

(4) Father Candido Maria of the Most Holy Wounds (Costa) was ordained as a secular priest and accepted into the Congregation by our Founder in 1757 at 50 years of age. He was Lector in Theology, Missionary, writer, Procurator General and then General Consultor. He died on August 30, 1788.

a week and not to rise for Matins during the night. Because these are essential points and even the Bishop <sup>(5)</sup> agrees with Dominic, I reply that I will never, never consent to it, because I would be a perjurer since I promised by oath in the Chapter to maintain the observance etc. Therefore I have washed my hands of it all and I have written that he can put Nuns there who eat meat and do not rise for Matins, for he will find as many of these as he wants, but never of our own Institute.

I have written all this to him, so that you too can resign yourself with me to the Will of God, since the Bishop and Dominic want it that way. It is a clear sign that God does not will such a work from us, and may He be blessed forever. My greetings in the Lord to your good sisters and I leave all three of you <sup>(6)</sup> in the gentle Heart of Jesus. I am always more ready to serve you when you will deign to command me. I am respectfully yours,

Your unworthy and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS †

(5) Bishop Saverio Giustiniani. - Paul said that he did not want to be a perjurer because at that time, after the election, the Superior General took an oath not to relax the observance of the Rule. Moreover, Paul believed that the rule of the male Passionists already approved by the Holy See, is, in its essence, that which the Passionist Nuns are to observe. They are members of the Passionist Congregation in full right.

(6) The three Costantini sisters: Mother Crucified, Mother Maria Teresa and Sister Mary Antonina.

*St. Angelo*  
*May 24, 1766* <sup>(1)</sup>

14

The Passion of Jesus Christ

May the Holy Spirit enlighten and enflame our hearts: Amen.

I received your letter in yesterday evening's mail and I am ever more grateful for the charity you continue to show me. But let us not take on the anguish of the death or the life of any creature, because, as St. Paul says, whether we live or whether we die, we belong to the Lord; <sup>(2)</sup> and this is enough. I thank the Lord that our Dominic has submitted so as not to violate the observance, etc. But the principal point is that if the Bishop does not agree to accept the income offered to him for the Nuns on Dominic's voucher, which is really enough for now at the start, I don't know what will be done, since everything depends on the Bishop <sup>(3)</sup>. And if he does not also take care of it in Rome, nothing can be done.

If God will grant me a little more life, I will do what I can. But I cannot work in Rome, both because of my illness and because nothing will be done in Rome without the information and approval of the Bishop.

Meanwhile let us cry to the Lord continually, since this holy work <sup>(4)</sup>, must be the fruit of prayer. Continue to remain in interior solitude, resting like an infant on the divine bosom of the Great Heavenly Father, leaving the care of everything to Him, because everything will thus go well.

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(1) This letter which is dated in the published collection May 24, 1768 is rather May 24, 1766, as one can see in examining the original autograph.

(2) Cfr. Romans 14:8.

(3) Bishop Saverio Giustiniani. Previously, Dominic and the Bishop were in agreement in presenting the difficulty. Now there remains only the difficulty of the Bishop who thinks that the income offered for the sustenance of the Nuns is insufficient.

(4) Paul refers to the foundation of the Passionist Nuns as a "holy work", which must be the fruit of prayer.

Continue to pray much for me and for the Congregation. My greetings to your good sisters <sup>(5)</sup>. I am in a hurry; I remain cordially yours,

Your most unworthy and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*Retreat of St. Angelo*  
*June 3, 1766*

15

### The Passion of Jesus Christ

My good daughter in Jesus Christ,

Yesterday evening I received your letter full of the best thoughts which have edified and consoled me in the Lord. With deep humility I thank our Merciful God Who communicates them to you. Nevertheless I assure you that what has been revealed to you has not been well understood by the one who related them; since I desire that the most chosen souls be hidden and concealed from the eyes of the poor world. Therefore I assure you that, although I do not have the least recollection that what your Reverence tells me escaped my mouth, still, supposing that I said it, — joking that I would not know what to do with you in the monastery and that you are good for nothing, — it is however certain that I would have said it in order to keep you ever hidden from the unfortunate worldly people. For our Good God usually chooses people to do the work of his great glory — people who are cast into nothingness and who are abject and despised by the world <sup>(1)</sup>. Moreover, I assure you that in my poor wretched heart your Reverence has always had first place among all the souls whom I have served for the glory of God <sup>(2)</sup>. Now that I

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(5) The two blood-sisters of Mother Crucified.

(1) cfr. I Cor. 1, 27.

(2) Paul clearly says that Mother Crucified had first place in his ministry of direction.

hear that you are treated with contempt and thrown around like a rag from one corner to another <sup>(3)</sup>, I have still greater hope for your spiritual life.

Therefore suffer contempt from relatives as well as from others with deep silence and patience. Accept it gratefully; never complain about it. In fact, welcome it all as a great treasure which His Divine Majesty gives to you. Suffer afflictions, fears, desolations, aridities, abandonment, temptations and other persecutions and what you suffer from devils and creatures of the world. Believe me, they are a noble broom which remove from your spirit all the dust and mud of the imperfections which are hidden from you. But one day you will know them, and His Divine Majesty is thus preparing you for a great ascent to holy perfection and union of charity with God and to taste the sweetest and most exquisite holy contemplation.

Put into practice what I have told you at other times: work, suffer and be silent. Do not complain, do not show resentment, do not justify yourself; these are the maxims of the saints and of great perfection.

Allow yourself to be guided by Divine Providence! I do not know when the final touch will be given to the monastery. The difficulties are great: the Bishop <sup>(4)</sup> is not well-disposed toward it and certainly not committed to it. Hence we must cry out to God that He will accomplish this, His work. If God will give me life and strength to see the foundation through, it is most certain that you should be the first to be clothed in the habit of the Most Holy Passion. I hope to give it to you with my own hands for the glory of Jesus Christ and Holy Mary <sup>(5)</sup>. However, keep this as a secret in your heart.

I beg you to continue your prayers for me because my needs are increasing. Unless I deceive myself, I seem to be coming closer and closer to my final day <sup>(6)</sup>. Pray much also for our Congregation and be happy in God because you have reason to be. Your spiritual life is good and in harmony with God's Will; have no doubts about it. Be

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(3) This image is found also in St. John of the Cross.

(4) Bishop Saverio Giustiiani.

(5) Actually Paul was not able to be present for the vestition because of ill health.

(6) Again Paul speaks of a premonition of death; yet he lived nine more years.

faithful in your practices, especially interior solitude <sup>(7)</sup>, remaining day and night in the divine bosom of the Heavenly Father, clothed in Jesus Christ and with His sufferings <sup>(8)</sup>. Like an infant, take the milk of holy love abundantly at the holy bosom of Divine Charity.

May Jesus bless you and make you as holy as I desire: Amen. My greetings to your sisters, and I remain

Your most unworthy and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*Retreat of St. Angelo  
December 15, 1767*

16

The Passion of Jesus Christ

Very Reverend Mother,

I received your letter yesterday evening <sup>(1)</sup>, and I thank you in Jesus Christ for the charity which you continually show me. I have much to do and I am writing in haste, but both during this sacred novena <sup>(2)</sup> and much more on the approaching Solemnity of Christmas, I shall beg the Sovereign Divine Infant to renew this mystical Divine Nativity in your heart, so that you may be reborn more every moment to a God-like and holy life <sup>(3)</sup>. But this sacred mystical Divine Nativity is celebrated every day in the deepest interior solitude. The loving soul is reborn in the Divine Humanized Word to a new life which is totally holy and God-like in this sacred desert, in

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(7) Paul continually emphasizes, 'interior solitude' to Mother Crucified; it is one of the salient features of Passionist spirituality.

(8) Paul emphasizes the Passion "clothed in Jesus and with His sufferings" as a continuous way of life.

(1) Paul responds to the Christmas greetings sent by Mother Crucified and takes the occasion of Christmas to recall the mystical nativity in her soul.

(2) Christmas Novena.

(3) Paul takes occasion of the Christmas Mystery to speak of mystical Divine Nativity.

deep contemplation and detachment from every created thing, in perfect nakedness and poverty of spirit, and in the sacred silence of faith and love <sup>(4)</sup>.

Please pass on this dutiful advice also to your good sisters <sup>(5)</sup>, and may they remember to pray for me also and for the good outcome of an important matter for the great glory of God and the great advantage of the Congregation <sup>(6)</sup>.

I shall pray for the health of the Canon and of Dominic, and I hope that at this moment they are up and around <sup>(7)</sup>.

Father John Mary <sup>(8)</sup>, in the letter I received yesterday, tells me that your Reverence told him that you wanted to give him 150 pence for the Masses celebrated, but that you did not give them to him, and adds that you see to whom you have given them, and that an account be made to you. Hence I hope that you will be able to recall it.

I will conclude in a hurry, by leaving you in the Most Pure Heart of Jesus and in the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I beg you to pray for the important business which I recommended to you in this letter. I remain respectfully and cordially yours,

Your most unworthy and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

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(4) Note the daily ideal of mystical Divine Nativity.

(5) The two blood-sisters of Mother Crucified.

(6) It seems that Paul is referring to the preparation for the Fifth General Chapter of the Congregation which was one of the most important to be held up to this time because of the decisions taken. It was held at Vetralla in May of 1769.

(7) The two brothers of Mother Crucified: Canon Nicholas Costantini and Dominic.

(8) Father John Mary of St. Ignatius (Cioni) - one of the most celebrated members of the Congregation. Born in Lucca, 1727 and professed a Passionist in 1747. He was a Rector at 26 and remained a Superior the rest of his life. Confessor of St. Paul. General of Congregation from 1784 to 1790. He helped the Nuns immensely.

*St. Angelo*  
*January 9, 1768*

17

### The Passion of Jesus Christ

Very Reverend Mother and my daughter in Jesus Christ,

I rejoice that your Reverence received Father Rector's <sup>(1)</sup> joke with humility, but I would wish that you were more resigned to it. I desire that your will be dead as it were in the ever-adorable Will of God, driving away those follies which go through your mind, as I read with displeasure in your last letter. Father Rector replied to that letter, because I was too busy. I enjoyed the joke, which was really respectful and prudent.

I would like you to practice the many holy directives which the Good Lord has given to you through me, and now I repeat these.

First: remain as it were dead and buried in the Divine Good Pleasure, without ever complaining about anything, but accept every suffering as coming directly from the sole loving hand of the Supreme Lord, who can only will the best for you <sup>(2)</sup>.

Keep your intellect in naked truth, clear of every phantasm and divested of every created thing, so that you may be more disposed to union with your Divine Lord by an ardent will.

Put to death every distress in the Divine Pleasure and believe me that if you think you suffer much, it is a sign that you love the Lord little, very little, because the true sign of holy love is to suffer great things for the Beloved Good, without seeming to suffer anything. Suffer and be silent, be silent and suffer <sup>(3)</sup>. Pray much for me, as I remain.

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(1) The Rector was Father Sebastian of the Purification (Giampaoli), one of the first religious of the Congregation. From 1759 he often went to Corneto to prepare for the foundation of the Retreat for the Passionist Fathers and Brothers - and must have known Mother Crucified well.

(2) Paul always puts the accent on God, the First Cause.

(3) This is Paul's program for giant souls.

Do not answer me for now, because I have much to do, but practice what I have written to you, etc (4).

Your useless Servant in the Lord  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*Retreat of St. Angelo*  
*March 15, 1768*

18

The Passion of Jesus Christ  
Jesus, Mary and Joseph (1)

I received your letter yesterday, and I also realize that it is very difficult to explain yourself in the things of God, since the gifts which come from that immense font of Infinite Power are inexplicable. If they could be explained, they would not be supernatural. I wanted to know in detail the effects which they produce in your soul; and it seems to me from what you have indicated briefly that there is no deceit (2).

However I wish that your Reverence would not depend on sensible consolation which the graces you receive in prayer or in Holy Communion bring, but seek only God, His glory and His Divine Good Pleasure. Continue to remain in your dreadful nothingness, offering incense to the Divine Majesty by same gifts, putting them in the fire of His holy love in pure faith, and remain divested of

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(4) Paul asks his directee not to write because he has a lot of work to do. Seeing that he could not respond in good time, Paul asks Mother not to respond but to put into practice the advice he has already given.

(1) Note reference in March letter to St. Joseph.

(2) This letter is short but very important because it shows Paul's method of direction. Seeing that Mother Crucified was favored with extraordinary gifts and that he could not visit her by reason of age and infirmity, Paul asked her to write down what was happening in her spirit. From the effects she explained, Paul discerned that there was no deceit.

them, deprived of every virtue and gift in such a way that His Divine Majesty will clothe you again with greater graces etc.

I see that the Good Lord does not give you any lights about my person and I bless the Lord for it, because it thus pleases Him; but I fear and tremble very much about myself, etc (3).

With regard to the affairs of the Congregation, I have cooperated and am cooperating as much as I know how and can, but I leave the outcome of it in the Holy Will of God (4).

Continue to pray for me and the Congregation, and may Jesus bless you. I am in a hurry.

Your useless Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*St. Angelo*  
*May 8, 1768*

19

The Passion of Jesus Christ

I express my very sincere thanks to you for your charitable remembrance of me, especially in your prayers, which I beg you to continue because my needs are very great. My illness and infirmities continue to increase, so much so that I can hardly celebrate Mass and do so only with difficulty; thanks be to God.

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(3) Like so many saints of God, Paul feared very much for himself.

(4) Paul's great love for the Congregation is at the same time a love full of detachment.

This letter, though very brief, is important because it indicates the actual office of Portress held by Mother Crucified. In the deposition she made for the beatification of St. Paul of the Cross, Mother Crucified said that she had been Portress, without specifying the time. Now from this letter we know that it was during, 1768. Given some abuses which were present and the severe depositions of ecclesiastical superiors, the office of Portress in St. Lucy's at Corneto was very delicate and could become the occasion of many troubles.

I have not yet seen the Lord Canon <sup>(1)</sup> and Mrs. Lucy <sup>(2)</sup> but I think that they are still at Conciglione etc <sup>(3)</sup>.

I am writing this note in a hurry, because today is the Feast of this Church <sup>(4)</sup> and the Magistrate of Vetralla <sup>(5)</sup> is coming shortly, as is the custom. Give my greetings in the Lord to your good sisters. Since I think that you have the office of Portress, may your Reverence keep the door of your heart closed tightly, so as to remain in the divine bosom of our Heavenly Father with greater repose of faith and holy love <sup>(6)</sup>. I remain cordially yours,

Your most unworthy and indebted Servant in the Lord,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*Retreat of St. Angelo*  
*June 21, 1768*

20

The Passion of Jesus Christ

My blessed daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am grateful in the Lord for your letter, which I received last evening. As I read in it that the Mercy of God visits you with sickness and other interior and exterior pains <sup>1)</sup>, I have reason then to bless and thank the Lord more. I say this because He tests you in that way and purifies you more so that you may be a true holocaustal

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(1) Lord Canon Nicholas Costantini, the brother of Mother Crucified.

(2) Mrs. Lucy: Lucy Casciola Costantini, the wife of Dominic Costantini

(3) Town in the diocese of Sutri.

(4) Paul is referring to the Feast of the Apparition of St. Michael the Archangel, which took place on Mount Gargano in Apulia. This feast was celebrated by the universal Church until recent times.

(5) Vetralla was the town nearest the Retreat of S. Angelo.

(6) Note Paul's spiritual understanding of the function of Portress. It is a work which is not meant to distract the Nun, but to foster greater interior solitude and repose in the Father's heart.

(1) Paul envisions sickness and illness as a visit of God's mercy.

victim, sacrificed in the fire of God's Charity, by means of afflictions for the greater glory and honor of the Most High.

Therefore be grateful to the Lord for such a great benefit and be more and more faithful to His Divine Majesty by continuing the usual practices and especially the practice of the most solid virtues, above all humility of heart and the knowledge of your true nothingness. Remain faithfully in the interior solitude of your spirit and rest in the divine bosom of the Beloved God. Often try to put your heart at peace, so that the winds of temptations, afflictions and contradictions may never weaken you or trouble you. Live quietly and joyfully in God, for you are more fortunate than you think.

I am enfeebled by my usual infirmity, besides what is not seen of the inside <sup>(2)</sup>. The matter I recommended to you still has no result, and according to present circumstances, it is not even going to have one. May the Holy Will of God be done in everything. My greetings in the Lord to your good sisters, and I ask all of you to pray for me and the Congregation.

I used this small piece of paper so as to save paper, because it is scarce here <sup>(3)</sup>. May Jesus bless you and make you as holy as I desire. I am cordially yours,

Your most indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*St. Angelo*  
*December 23, 1768*

21

### The Passion of Jesus Christ

Very Reverend Mother and Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

My many and serious illnesses, and much more my continual occupations have deprived me of the consolation of writing to you up

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(2) Paul refers to his great interior trials as « what is not seen of the inside ».

(3) Note the poverty in which he lives; writing paper is scarce.

to now. But now as I see that your charity has taken the lead, by your letter as well by your charitable alms of delicious pastries which will refresh these good Religious on the coming Solemnity <sup>(1)</sup>, I cannot fail to offer you my most humble thanks in Jesus Christ, both to your Reverence as well as to your good and very devoted sisters. I assure you just as I have not forgotten, during this holy novena, to ask the Lord to give you every spiritual and eternal grace and blessing, so much the more shall I do this on the approaching holy night of Christmas. I will carry you with me in spirit to the holy altar at the solemn celebration of the divine sacrosanct mysteries, asking the Sovereign Divine Infant Jesus Christ to celebrate this most holy Christmas mystically in your hearts, so that you all might be reborn in the Divine Humanized Word to a new life, totally God-Like and holy, and especially your Reverence <sup>(2)</sup>. Believe me, good daughter, that you cannot have more certain signs of God's love toward you than the suffering which He permits and gives you. In this way God is going to perfect your soul more and more so that you may be able to guard well that holy nest of the Doves of Jesus Christ <sup>(3)</sup>, which I hope His Divine Majesty will make a perfect sanctuary. I am writing

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We have only a copy of this letter. The autograph copy was given to the cleric Paul Marino of Catania.

(1) i.e., Christmas

(2) Note how Paul's spirit is so in tune with the liturgical season.

(3) Paul aims to make Mother Crucified a model which can serve as an example for the future Passionist Nuns. The image "Doves of the Crucified" came in vision to Lucy Burlini, a directee of Father Paul. The image of 'doves' evokes biblical themes. The Fathers of the Church saw in the contemplative soul the bride of the Song of Songs: "O my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the secret recesses of the cliff, Let me see you, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and you are lovely". (Song of Songs 2: 14). They identified these recesses in the wounds of Christ, penetrated through loving contemplation and become the secure abode against every call of earthly pleasure. Even the moaning of the dove is a biblical theme indicating participation in the Passion of Christ. "Like a swallow I utter shrill cries; I moan like a dove. My eyes grow weak, gazing heavenward: O Lord, I am in straits: be my surety!" (Isaiah 38:14)... "We all growl like bears, like doves we moan without ceasing. We look for right, but it is not there, for salvation, and it is far from us". (Isaiah 59:11).

For Paul, the theme of the dove also indicates strong desire for solitude: "And I say", "Had I but wings like a dove, I would fly away and be at rest. Far away I would flee; I would lodge in the wilderness". (Ps. 55:7).

In a special way Paul understands the theme of doves as "mourning" for the Lord's death which is celebrated "by the continual practice of the virtues". According to Paulacrucian doctrine, Passionist Nuns mourn because God is dead in the consciences of so many men and women.

in haste and my head is not able to endure any more. I leave you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of His holy and Divine Mother with your devoted sisters. I am faithfully yours,

Your true indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*St. Angelo*  
*January 14, 1769*

22

Very Reverend Mother,

I am replying to your letter in haste. I tell you that perfect resignation to the Will of God is practiced in the most difficult things and that they are desired more by awaiting peacefully the visit of the Lord in perfect submission and tranquillity since His Divine Majesty knows well the opportune moment to do the works of His glory. To us it belongs to wait with peaceful and silent patience. This is the way saintly souls have acted. You are resigned in other things, but you are not very resigned in the matter of the foundation of the monastery <sup>(1)</sup>. Therefore, this is the strongest and most necessary point. For if you want to please God, you should resign yourself in this matter also and wait in silence for God to open the way. You should be constant and joyful in the good pleasure of God, whether the foundation follows or not, provided that the Lord be glorified in everything. Thus you will be at peace <sup>(2)</sup>.

I also say that the thought or desire you have of going to Rome is a temptation, a distraction and a phantasm of your mind <sup>(3)</sup>.

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(1) Paul refers to the foundation of the future monastery of Passionist Nuns, the principal topic of this letter.

(2) Note Paul's accent on God's Will and Glory and not on human results.

(3) The future of the monastery for Passionist Nuns was at a standstill because the Bishop considered the annual income offered by the Constantini's to be insufficient. The unexpected proposal of the Bishop (he asked for 50 scudi annually

Believe me that this is a mistake. The Pope would never grant you this favor, without hearing the Bishop, to whom he would defer the whole matter. This is the Holy See's way of proceeding. Therefore get rid of such thoughts. Apply yourself to the perfection to which God has called you there, and wait with silent, resigned patience for what God will dispose in the future. Continue to pray for me and be assured that I am always faithfully yours,

Your most unworthy and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*St. Angelo*  
*March 7 1769*

23

The Passion of Jesus Christ

My good daughter in Jesus Christ,

With this note I reply in haste to your letter which I received yesterday evening.

My health is as usual, and I can say that I am sick more than I am healthy. For this reason I cannot take the risk now of coming there for the foundation <sup>(1)</sup>. I am sending Father Rector from here, with full faculties to act in my place. If God wills it, I will come at another time when the roads are better, but now it would be too dangerous for me. I thank your Reverence and the good sisters very much in Jesus Christ for having cooperated so much in this foundation by your charitable works for that Church. Rest assured that His Divine

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for every Nun) brought confusion since the Constantini's could not provide that kind of money at that time. At this point Mother Crucified, in great frustration, conceives the idea of going to Rome and pleading with the Pope herself. Paul, knowing by experience how things develop, rightly dissuades her.

(1) Paul is referring to his eleventh foundation, which was to be made in Corneto on March 17, 1769. This Retreat was later closed down by the Passionists.

Majesty has prepared a spiritual and eternal reward for you. Have courage and be at peace, like an infant in the bosom of the Gentle Jesus. And be assured that the time of His visitation will come even sooner than we think.

I am writing in haste and with difficulty, because I am not well. My greetings to your very devoted sisters, and remain in peace, totally dead and buried in the Holy Side of Jesus, in whom I repeat my sincere regards. Pray much for me and for the Congregation etc.

Your most unworthy and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*Rome,  
Hospice of the Most Holy Crucified  
October 24, 1769*

24

### The Passion of Jesus Christ

Very Reverend Mother,

I am replying to your Reverence's letter which I received this morning. Since, in your charity, you want to know how I am, I tell you that for the most part I am sick rather than healthy, and I can hardly drag myself around the Hospice <sup>(1)</sup>.

The mission was richly blessed by God, with abundant fruit and the approval of the Romans <sup>(2)</sup>. There now, I've given you the news you asked for.

I cannot pass by way of Corneto. It will be a long trip before I

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(1) The Hospice of the Most Holy Crucified, located near the Church of St. John Lateran in Rome, was the home of St. Paul of the Cross and his companions from 1766 until 1773, when they transferred to Sts John and Paul.

(2) Paul refers to his last mission - conducted in the Basilica of S. Maria in Trastevere, Rome, from September 17-21, of 1769 in preparation for the holy Jubilee.

arrive at St. Angelo by the good road, even when the Superiors will give me permission to depart, which I doubt, from what I know.

I am somewhat doubtful whether Dominic has cooled off as regards completing the work of the monastery. I would not want him to let the devil win nor to let his own hypochondria conquer through human respect.

I have nothing more to say to you except to beg you to be faithful to God, to continue your customary practice and to put great emphasis on interior recollection. My hand is shaking. In haste I remain

Your most affectionate and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

*Date is lacking* <sup>(1)</sup>

25

The Passion of Jesus Christ

Very Reverend Mother and beloved daughter in Christ Jesus,

I am forcing myself to reply to your letter which I received yesterday evening and first of all, I thank you with all my heart for the pastries you sent me. In obedience to you, I shall eat some.

It would be a great grace from God if I should have the good fortune of giving you the habit of the Most Holy Passion, when the new monastery will have been finished. But I doubt it, because I am coming ever closer to the grave. In the meantime your Reverence is prepared more and more by God's grace to receive those graces and gifts which His Divine Majesty has provided for you.

Such preparation should consist principally in true humility of heart and contempt of self by profound and genuine knowledge of your nothingness. This brings with it the practice of all the virtues,

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(1) This letter, though undated, was written a few days before Christmas, probably in 1769. From the context, it was written obviously before Mother Crucified received the Passionist habit.

the queen of which is holy charity <sup>(2)</sup> and union with God by true contemplation and detachment from every created thing and a total abandonment to the Divine Good Pleasure. Be a true inhabitant in the interior of your spirit; remain deeply enclosed in this sacred desert, since this holy solitude is rich in every good <sup>(3)</sup>. In this divine solitude, with the doors closed tightly to every creature, and completely clothed in Jesus Christ, lose and immerse yourself in the Immense <sup>(4)</sup> Divinity. There, in the sacred silence of faith and holy love contemplate the Supreme Good and allow yourself to be reduced to ashes in the fire of God's Charity. Never lose this holy solitude wherever you are or in whatever work you are doing <sup>(5)</sup>.

I do and shall include you always in my poor and very cold prayers, especially during these holy days <sup>(6)</sup> and particularly on the Solemnity of Christmas, so that His Divine Majesty may bring about in you the rebirth of the Divine Humanized Word to a God-like, deiform life, so that no longer you, but Jesus Christ will live in you <sup>(7)</sup>. Do the same for me out of charity and for our whole Congregation. Greetings in the Lord to your good sisters, and leaving you all in the Most Pure Heart of Jesus, from whom I beg abundant blessings for you, I say in haste,

Our men have not come to you, because it is forbidden in our Rules for the monks to go to convents, without specific need.

Your most unworthy and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

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(2) Paul always emphasizes the primacy of charity.

(3) Paul's approach to solitude is always a positive one; it is never negative.

(4) "Immense" is an important word in Paul's vocabulary; cfr. *Spiritual Diary*.

(5) For Paul, solitude is a permanent dynamic of the spirit; note again Paul's insistence on it.

(6) Paul is probably referring to the Christmas novena.

(7) Cfr. Galatians 2:20.

The Passion of Jesus Christ

Very Reverend and esteemed Mother in Christ,

I rejoice in the Lord that His Divine Majesty has brought this holy work to completion <sup>(1)</sup>, with all of you consecrated as Brides of the Crucified through your holy vows. Now it remains for all of you to correspond with such a great grace. Therefore, try especially to put into practice the holy directives <sup>(2)</sup> given you by Father John Mary <sup>(3)</sup>. Let them observe their holy Rules. Above all, they shall reveal the light of Christ's charity among themselves by loving one another, by sharing their sufferings in community, by being of mutual help to one another in their need, in a word, by being to one another a living witness to the Crucified, so that they may be splendor for this world, which has grown so cold <sup>(4)</sup>.

I thank His Divine Majesty that you have been elected President <sup>(5)</sup> of the community. I am very happy about this and hope

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The present and following letters have only the signature of St. Paul; however we find the same style and phraseology, leading us to suppose that they were written by the same person. This was the first extant letter to Mother Crucified from Paul after she was elected Superior.

(1) The "holy work" is the foundation of the Passionist Nuns.

(2) This may refer to the Regulations given to the Nuns in 1772. Father John Mary is certainly the principal author, but Paul was in perfect agreement. In fact, he signed them and added "May Jesus Christ Our Lord eternally bless those who observe them".

(3) Father John Mary of St. Ignatius (Cioni).

(4) This is a clear expression of the evangelical spirit of Paul's spirituality: community charity is first in his mind and heart. The true spirit of the Crucified is to give his life for love of the brethren. This is the witness value of the Nuns' life. Love, and not suffering, is the center of Christian spirituality.

(5) *President* is the title Paul chooses for the Superior of the Community. Paul does not use the name Superior. He wanted the President to be always aware that she was only a "substitute". Cfr. Regulations of 1772: "Distrust yourself and put all your confidence in God; for such an effect, every morning choose Mary as the Superior of the Monastery, to whom you will go and make a special act of homage, to ask Her for light and grace to fulfill your ministry well". (Regolamenti 11, n. 6)

The term *President* signifies one who stands before the community. It is

that your administration will be a very holy one, and that you will distrust yourself and put your confidence in God and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Be prudent in all things; this is the principal point. Treat all of the nuns with a spirit of charity and meekness <sup>(6)</sup>. If you act in this way, all will go well, as I trust it will. What do you mean when you speak of my health? It is true that I am a little better but I am not too steady on my feet because my whole body aches and my nerves are very weak. Recommend me, then, to the Lord that His holy Will be fulfilled in me, which is my constant desire <sup>(7)</sup>.

Give my kind regards to all the Nuns and particularly to your sisters, and to Mother Mary Magdalen <sup>(8)</sup> whom I hope will become a saint. I send my holy blessing to all. Leaving you all in the Heart of Jesus, I am

May Jesus make you holy as I desire and ask the same for me. May you always remain in your nothingness, allowing this nothingness to disappear in the Infinite All Who is God the Greatest and Best of all <sup>(9)</sup>.

Your useless Servant,  
PAUL OF THE † <sup>(10)</sup>

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significant too that Paul calls the General "Preposito": the etymology indicates one who has been put before others - not above. The term President was not proper to Paul; he found the same term in other Institutes. He understood it in an evangelical tone of maternal service.

(6) Note the qualities which Paul looks for in the Superior.

(7) Paul always looks to God's Will - not to man's feelings.

(8) Mary Magdalen of St. Joseph (Calzelli) came from Paliano. She was one of the first Passionist lay-Sisters and died in great holiness, *December 25, 1819. She was 68.*

(9) Paul's theology is always positive; nothingness is to disappear in the Infinite All of God. These two sentences form a postscript added in Paul's own hand.

(10) Note the way Paul signs this letter.

*Hospice of the Most Holy  
Crucified  
July 11, 1772*

27

I am replying to your very kind letter and I tell you that I could have no greater consolation in Jesus Christ than to hear about the way your Reverence acted in having the sandals made for the Nuns <sup>(1)</sup>. Continue to hold to this prudent regulation so that the door is never opened and none of the Religious is ever seen by anyone from outside. For that reason, as I say, I am very happy that it was done in the way you describe for me. I thank the Giver of every good that He grants you his holy lights to guide this religious family well, which I will respect on my part. I send my holy blessing to all, asking them never to forget me in their prayers so that His Divine Majesty may enable me to fulfill His Will more and more perfectly, because we see by that that the Lord God wants to keep me thus crucified with Him as long as it will please Him. Even though I get up every day, this does not mean that I have the strength. Rather I feel more and more depressed and exhausted. Still I am very happy, because it pleases God. Pray above all for our Holy Father <sup>(2)</sup> and for Holy Church etc.

Leaving you in the Most Pure Heart of Jesus Crucified, I remain

Your most affectionate and indebted Servant  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

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(1) In the preceding letter we have seen Mother Crucified in her interior life; now she is presented as superior coming to grips with the difficulties of governing. We must recall that her task was not an easy one. She was founding the first monastery of a new Institute and with some persons who had no experience of monastic and religious life. Further, the new monastery was not to reproduce the way of life found in other monasteries of that time, but must be a model of interior spirit, detachment from the things of the world and of external discipline.

This was a delicate and difficult task for Mother Crucified.

According to ordinary procedure, in these circumstances the shoemaker would have entered the enclosure to take the feet measurement of each of the Nuns. Mother Crucified found a way of obtaining the same result, without bringing the shoemaker into the enclosure.

(2) Pope Clement XIV.

Rome  
*Hospice of the Most Holy Crucified*  
April 16, 1773

Very Reverend and faithful Mother in Christ,

I thank your Reverence for the prayers which you have offered and are offering with the Nuns for me. I beg you to continue them not only for me, but for the whole Congregation, for His Holiness and for the grave needs of Holy Church <sup>(1)</sup>. I rejoice in the Lord that you have been served well and have been happy with Father Rector of the Presentation Retreat <sup>(2)</sup>. I desire nothing more than that you grow in the observance and perfection and that you live in total peace and union of charity, so that you may be a good aroma to all, as true brides of Jesus Crucified and beloved daughters of Mary Most Holy. I will pray for your Reverence and for all the Nuns.

I would like to know if God continues in your Reverence that grace <sup>(3)</sup> which the good God gave you years ago when you conferred with me. Write to me and rest assured that I alone shall read your letter <sup>(4)</sup>. *I beg God to grant your Reverence and all the Nuns an abundance of divine graces and blessings. Leaving you in the Most Holy Wounds of Jesus Crucified, I sign my name. Give me some information about your interior life* <sup>(5)</sup>.

Your most affectionate and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF THE CROSS

(1) Note the ecclesial thrust of Paul's prayer-requests.

(2) He probably preached their retreat.

(3) The grace is unknown, but probably an extraordinary one.

(4) Paul gives this assurance since he is not writing his own letters at this time, because of infirmity.

(5) Paul wrote this last sentence in his own hand.

Rome,  
May 12, 1773

### The Passion of Jesus Christ

Very Reverend and faithful Mother in Christ,

The desire for the spiritual good of Your Reverence and all the other Nuns compelled me at times to write a little severely and to express my feelings to your Reverence and the other Nuns as I have felt them in the Lord from time to time. I did this because I sincerely desire to see you all become saints and to be the good aroma first for the Crucified, then for the glory of the Crucified in the whole world as well as in the city of Corneto.

As your Reverence has explained adequately in your letters, I am strengthened a little in the Lord to see that you still maintain your spirit in fervor and live in peace. Therefore try ever more to pay attention to interior solitude of heart and to keep your mind and heart calm, not allowing yourself to get worried and distracted. In this way you will become ever more worthy of the Lord's mercies and a worthy Bride of Jesus Crucified. May you be the model for the Daughters of the Passion, who should mourn perpetually for the love of the Crucified Lord not only by their habit, but even more so in their heart, in their mind and in their actions, and heal His holy wounds by the continual practice of the virtues, since this is the purpose for the foundation of their Institute <sup>(1)</sup>.

I am pleased that your sisters and the novice, the Berardi girl, will be professed soon <sup>(2)</sup>. May the Good God be pleased to fill them with His most precious gifts and to receive their holy sacrifice as a perpetual and acceptable holocaust. May He help them to become mirrors of holiness, which is my heart's prayer and desire. Greetings to all the Nuns. I remain

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Paul was 79 years of age when he wrote this letter and had been continually sick for 2½ years and almost always bedridden. However, besides the efficient government of his own Congregation, he found time to concern himself also with the formation of the first Passionist Nuns, and continued that direction which several of the Nuns had been receiving for years.

(1) This is Paul's clear expression of the purpose of the Institute.

(2) Paul is referring to Mother Maria Teresa and Sister Mary Antonina, the two bloodsisters of Mother Crucified and Catherine Berardi from Macerata.

I have written the other part<sup>(3)</sup> where I mention the small pittance for Friday and the rest separately, so that you can detach it and have it read to the Religious or at least to the Mother Econome. May they be very vigilant in maintaining the observance and not introducing the least abuse or relaxation, if they don't want to become guilty of all the faults that the nuns will commit. Let everything however be done with gentleness, peace and charity.

Your most affectionate and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF (THE) †

*Rome*  
*Holy Retreat of Sts. John and Paul*  
*March 29, 1774*

### **The Passion of Jesus Christ**

Very Reverend and faithful Mother in Christ,

I rejoice in the Lord that your Reverence and the other Nuns were satisfied with Father Rector from St. Angelo<sup>(1)</sup> and for the good will which all of them have in applying themselves to acquire true virtues and the perfection of their own state. They will certainly attain this if they will observe their Rules and often look at themselves in the life and example of Jesus Crucified. They will attain this if they are careful to keep their minds and hearts raised to God and are serious about holy prayer and detachment of heart from every created thing of this world, even the most precious, in order to dispose themselves to be full of God and His graces.

I extend my best wishes for a very Happy Easter to your Reverence, to each and everyone of the Nuns and to the whole Costantini family.

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(3) We do not have a copy of this "other part".

(1) During Lent of 1774, Father John Baptist of St. Ignatius (Porta), Rector of S. Angelo in Vetralla preached the retreat to the Nuns.

When His Eminence Cardinal De Zelada comes <sup>(2)</sup>, I shall do what you tell me. May the Lord in His mercy enable us to imitate St. Paul and say in truth: the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me <sup>(3)</sup>. Leaving all of you in the Wounds of the Crucified, I remain

Your affectionate and indebted Servant,  
PAUL OF (THE) †

*Rome*  
*Retreat of Sts. John and Paul*  
*November 8, 1774*

Very Reverend and esteemed Mother in Christ,

Tears came to my eyes as I heard about the death of our Mother Maria Teresa <sup>(1)</sup> whom I hope is already enjoying the vision of God. At any rate, I shall write to the Fathers Provincial, so that they may have the suffrages offered etc. I have requested that in addition all the priests celebrate one Mass in suffrage for her. I understand that this loss has been very difficult for your Reverence, as it has been for me, but it helps me to think that she will not forget the Congregation, the Monastery nor the Costantini family in heaven. During the time she lived among them she never failed to give example of true virtue and to show herself a worthy bride of the Crucified. Now may they try to imitate her good example and virtues so that at the moment of their death they may be able to enjoy by anticipation the fruit of true peace and serenity of conscience, with the moral

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(2) After the death of Clement XIV, Cardinal De Zelada remained most faithful to the Nuns. There are 21 letters of the Cardinal to the Monastery from 1773 until 1787.

(3) cfr. Galatians 2:20. This is the effect of mystical death as Paul says in another text (cfr. Letters III, 756). This is the high point of Paul's interior way. Total surrender to the Spirit of Jesus corresponds to the Father's call to the martyrdom of the cross.

(1) Mother Maria Teresa of the Holy Spirit (Costantini) was a sister of Mother Crucified who transferred from the Benedictines to the Passionists on April 4, 1772. She lived as a Passionist for only two years.

certainty of passing from the exile and miseries of this world to the heavenly homeland and the true happiness of paradise.

Greetings from me to all your family and to all the Nuns, whom, with your Reverence, I leave in the most holy Wounds of the Crucified. I remain

At your convenience, please send a summary of the life of Mother Maria Teresa as the Rule says.

Your most affectionate Servant,  
PAUL OF (THE) †

*Rome*  
*Sts. John and Paul*  
*April 22, 1775*

### *The Passion of Jesus Christ*

Very Reverend and faithful Mother in Christ,

I have been greatly consoled by the news your Reverence sent me on Low Sunday that your good postulants would be receiving the religious habit. On that day I shall offer them to the Lord as victims of love so that all of them, in a holocaust of pure spirit, may offer themselves to their Crucified Bridegroom with a strong will to follow Him until death. This will happen if they will be truly obedient and mortified for their well-adjusted interior life depends on that. They should deepen their interior recollection and then their exterior deportment will also be exemplary and well-regulated. Thus they will live a gentle, quiet and peaceful life, and will be happy even in this world (1).

I am very sorry about the Carboni girl, but we must adore the judgments of God.

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(1) Note Paul's emphasis on interior life as a gauge for their external deportment. In Paul the term of suffering is always glory and happiness and is experienced even in this world. The spirituality of Paul is never expressed in the climate of depression but is always expressed with a moral sureness of passing from exile to happiness.

My greetings to all, and assure them that I pray for all of them every day that they may all become saints. I conclude, leaving you in the Most Pure Heart of Jesus Crucified.

Your most unworthy Servant,  
PAUL OF (THE) †



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